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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQ'S COR PASSES ELECTORAL COMMISSION LAW AND
VOTES TO EXTEND SESSION INTO FEBRUARY

Classified By: Acting Pol Counselor Robert Gilchrist for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

11. (C) On January 23 the Council of Representatives (CoR) passed the law establishing the Independent Higher Election Commission (IHEC) and voted to extend the current CoR session until February 10 to give them extra time to consider the 2007 budget, the state of emergency, and the law of governorates not formed into a region (known as the provincial powers law). The CoR speaker also announced that the Prime Minister would visit the CoR on January 25 to discuss the Baghdad security plan.

12. (C) The CoR made several changes to the most recent version of the IHEC law in a small negotiating session before the vote and on the floor of the CoR during the vote. While we cannot make a definitive assessment of these changes until we obtain and translate the final version of the law, we do not believe these changes to be significant. On January 22 and the morning of January 23 several contacts told us that Shi'a coalition leaders were holding up the IHEC vote because they wanted a clearer definition of the "supervision" that the IHEC would provide to regional and local elections organized by regional election commissions. Negotiators clearly ironed out this issue before the third reading and vote on the floor, as it sparked no controversy. (Note: It appeared that the manner of "supervision" was left undefined. End note.) While the voting process was chaotic, it was generally congenial, almost everyone in attendance appeared to vote for the law, and there were no noticeable tensions on sectarian or ethnic lines.

13. (C) Comment: The decision to extend the session and the vote on the IHEC law came as welcome surprises. Senior CoR leaders never indicated to us that they would extend the session into February, and even on the morning of January 23 we were uncertain that the IHEC law would be passed before January 25. The CoR must now appoint commission members and pass legislation setting an election date for provincial elections to be held in 2007. We hope that the January 23 session indicates a newfound seriousness at the CoR. End comment.
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